Holiday Fire Safety 2004

ALBERTA FIRE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

Alberta
MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

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A message from the Fire Commissioner of Alberta

Happy Holidays!

Dear Albertans:

As we enter the holiday season, thoughts turn to joining together with family and friends and celebrating the past year. However, this time of year can also prove to be a dangerous one, and we must all continue to be mindful of the importance of fire safety and prevention to ensure that the holidays are happy and safe.

Alberta's fire statistics reflect the importance of safety over the holidays. During the holiday period (December 15 - December 31) of the past five years, the incidence of fires went up by 32 per cent, fire deaths increased by 40 per cent, fire injuries increased by 48 per cent and property loses went up by 27 per cent when compared with the rest of the year.

The increase in the number of fires, deaths, injuries and property losses during this time of year are attributed to **candle, home heating, clothes dryer, and electrical source fires, all of which increase significantly during the holiday season.** Candle-related fires are one of the most noteworthy, increasing by 140 per cent over the holiday season.

The Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) put together this Holiday Fire Safety Campaign kit to support and assist your December holiday fire prevention and safety efforts. The support materials supplied in this kit may be used and duplicated for individual use, in local newspapers or other publications, on television stations, or may be distributed to schools or at public events where fire prevention and safety are promoted. The kit contains the following:

- √ December holiday home fire statistics
- √ December holiday "Fire Facts"
- √ Holiday event planner
- √ Sample Public Service Announcements
- √ Sample advertisements
- √ Children's activities and games
- √ Colourful graphics, cartoons, games and activities
- √ Link to the National Institute of Standards and Technology Scotch Pine Christmas Tree Fire Video

Best wishes for a fire-safe holiday season!

J.P. Graham
Fire Commissioner

Holiday Home Fire Statistics, 2004

As the December holiday season arrives, our thoughts turn to organizing festivities and celebrations. While this is a time of fun, joyous activities, it is also a time of high fire risk and danger. The heightened excitement in our homes caused by the extra distractions of visiting relatives, children staying home on school holidays, shopping, decorating, cooking, and parties can place a heavy demand on everyone's time and attention, causing us to overlook and compromise on safety. Our hectic agendas and hurried pace along with the additional hazards winter brings, such as home heating and the use of space heaters, exposes us to a variety of unsafe situations, including fire!

The table below examines provincial fire losses during the holiday season compared to fire losses for the rest of the year. The statistics identified compare the 17 days of the holiday season (December 15 – December 31) with a 17-day average for the rest of the year.

December Holiday Home Fire Losses: Seasonal Comparison (1999-2003)

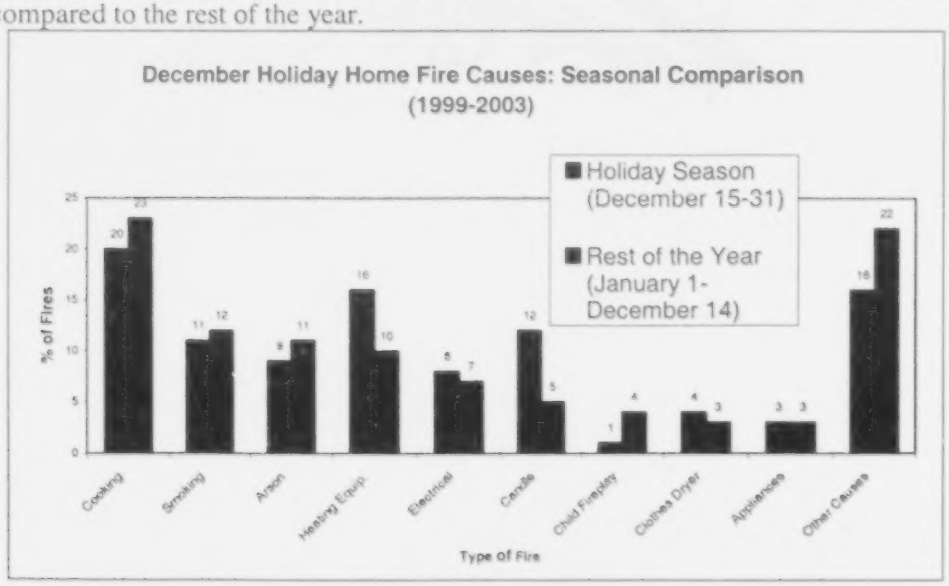
17-Day Period	Fires	Deaths	Injuries	Property Losses
Holiday Season (December 15-31)	499	7	68	$22,501,858
Rest of the Year (January 1-December 14)	379	5	46	$17,736,612

During the December holiday season the number of fires, deaths, injuries and property losses all intensify compared to the rest of the year.

December Holiday Home Fire Losses: Summary

- Fires: ⬆ 32%
- Fire deaths: ⬆ 40%
- Fire injuries: ⬆ 48%
- Property losses: ⬆ 27%

The chart below summarizes the most common causes of fires during the December holiday season, compared to the rest of the year.



As identified in the table above, the major cause of home fires in both time periods is related to cooking fires. During the December holiday season, however, the incidence of fires involving candles, home heating equipment, clothes dryers, and electrical sources increase significantly over these same categories for the rest of the year.

December Holiday Home Fire Causes: Summary

- Candle fires: ⬆ 140%
- Home heating fires: ⬆ 60%
- Clothes Dryer fires: ⬆ 33%
- Electrical source fires: ⬆ 14%

The alarming increase not only in the number of fires but also in deaths, injuries and property damage during this season reminds us to take more care in fire prevention and safety during the holiday season. In addition to keeping the continuing hazards involved with cooking under control, extra precautions must be taken with candles, heating equipment, clothes dryers and electricity. For a fire safe holiday season, follow the fire safety tips included in this kit.

The Fire Commissioner's Holiday Fire Safety Campaign runs from December 15-31. The campaign kit is designed to increase public awareness of the increased fire risk during the holiday season. This kit, as well as a link to the Scotch Pine Christmas Tree Fire Video (http://www.fire.nist.gov/tree_fire.htm), will be posted on the Fire Commissioner's office website: at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco.

For further details on the campaign, please contact Te-Jay Smart, Fire Safety Officer, Programs, at the Fire Commissioner's Office at (780) 644-4692(dial 310-0000 for toll-free access).

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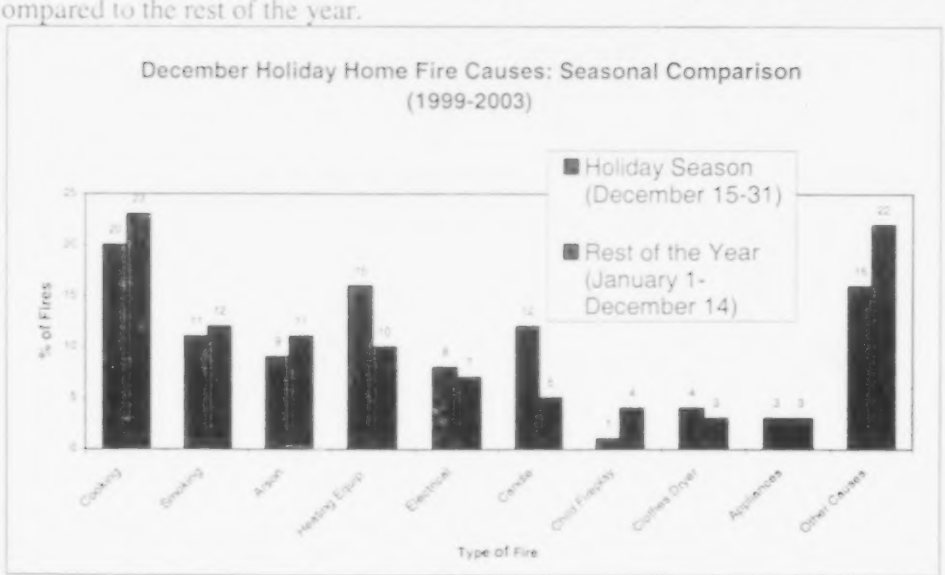

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The December holiday season

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The Facts

- The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger.
- During the December holiday season the incidence of fires and fire loses involving candles, home heating equipment, clothes dryers, and electrical sources increase significantly over these same categories for the rest of the year.

Safety Tips

Christmas Trees

- Ensure your artificial tree is "Fire Resistant."
- Ensure your live tree is fresh and moist at all times. Cut the stalk at an angle and keep the tree well-watered. Dropping needles indicate a dry, highly flammable tree.
- Set up live and artificial trees away from fireplaces, heaters and other heat sources, and ensure it is not blocking an exit.

Lighting

- Indoors or outdoors, use only lights that have been tested and labelled by a recognized testing agency such as the ULC or CSA.
- Inspect holiday lights yearly for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections and throw out damaged sets.
- If using extension cords, make sure they are rated for the intended use and in good condition.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.
- Turn off all holiday lights when you go to bed or leave the house.
- Outdoor electric lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

Decorations

- Choose non-flammable decorations whenever possible.
- Keep decorations, curtains, clothing and spray aerosol cans away from open flames or heat sources, such as lights, candles, heaters or fireplaces.
- Never put a candle on or near the branches of your Christmas tree.
- Mount candles on metal or glass candleholders, or place them in non-combustible containers.

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Holiday Entertaining

- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Never leave your cooking unattended.
- Provide smokers with large, deep ashtrays and check the ashtrays frequently. Douse butts completely in water before discarding.
- After a party, check inside and under upholstery and cushions for smouldering cigarettes.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of sight and reach of children.
- Test your smoke alarms and explain your fire escape plan to your guests.
- Do not smoke in bed, when tired or under the influence of alcohol or medication. Smoking is the most common cause of fire deaths.

General

- Have your chimney and furnace cleaned and professionally inspected prior to each winter season.
- Keep heating appliances at least one metre (three feet) away from combustibles.
- Electrical and heating systems can fail and become fire hazards. Ensure they are regularly checked by a professional, especially prior to the holiday season when fireplaces, heaters, appliances and other electrical equipment are in maximum use.
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home and a well-rehearsed fire escape plan in case a fire does break out in your home.
- Have a multi-purpose fire extinguisher in your home with a minimum rating of 3A, 10B, C.
- Protect your home this holiday season by covering your decorations with fire retardant spray and decorating your Christmas tree with a fire alarm ornament. Contact the Fire Commissioner's Office for more information on these products.

Be cautious with candles!

It is important to remember that a candle flame is a small fire that can very easily start a large, dangerous fire. Here are some findings related to candle fires in Alberta homes:

- The increased use of candles during the festive season means candle-related fires are at their highest during this time.
- Most people do not know how to use candles safely.
- Most candle fires happen in bedrooms and living/family rooms, and ignite bedding or furniture.
- Failing to put out a burning candle before going to bed accounts for the majority of deaths and injuries in candle-related fires.
- Most candle fires involve human error, such as leaving a candle unattended or leaving a candle near combustible materials (e.g., curtains, furniture, decorations).
- Unsupervised children may play with candles because they are curious and are fascinated by the flame.
- Consumers assume that their candleholders are safe, and don't expect the candles to tip over or the holders to break or catch fire - yet they can.

How can candles be used safely?

- **Never leave burning candles unattended. Put candles out if the flame becomes unusually large. Never let candles burn down to the bottom.**
- Avoid using candles whenever possible, and if candles are used, keep flammable and combustible materials as far from the flame as possible.
- Imagine the various scenarios of how a candle flame could start a dangerous fire in your home, for example: *"Someone may open this window and the curtain blowing in the wind could come in contact with the flame and catch fire. It is not wise for me to place this candle near the window."* Take action to prevent such scenarios from happening.
- Mount candles on non-combustible holders that won't tip over and are big enough to collect dripping wax.
- Do not place lit candles in windows where blinds or curtains may close over them, and don't use them in places where children or pets could knock them over.
- Snuff candles out when leaving the room or going to sleep. Remember that 70 per cent of fire deaths related to candle fires happened because people were asleep at the time of the fire.
- Never leave children or pets alone in a room with lit candles. Pets or children can play with the flame and start a fire or be burned. Do not allow older children to light candles in their bedroom. A forgotten candle is all it takes to start a fire.
- Exercise caution when using candles as a source of light during power outages. Many destructive fires start during outages since potential fire hazards can go unnoticed in the dark.
- Never use a candle for light when fuelling equipment such as a camp-fuel heater lantern.
- When buying or using novelty candles, try to determine if they pose a pose a potential fire threat. If they do, or you suspect they might, inform your local fire department or the Product Safety Program of Health Canada in Edmonton or Calgary.

Careful cooking

Most destructive home fires start in the kitchen. These tips can help you to prevent kitchen fires.

- Use a temperature-controlled deep fat fryer for frying. If you are using a pot, keep a proper fitting lid nearby. If a grease fire starts, carefully cover the pan with the lid to smother the flames.
- Never leave frying food or cooking oil unattended on a hot stove.
- Keep paper, curtains, dishcloths, paper towels, potholders, cardboard containers and plastics well away from heat sources.
- Wear short and tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Loose sleeves can catch fire over the hot stove.
- Avoid cooking when you are sleepy or drowsy from medication or alcohol.
- Turn pot handles in to prevent children from pulling them down.
- Do not use defective electric appliances - have them checked and serviced.
- Keep the hood, filter, fan and duct above the stove clean. Grease buildup is a fire hazard.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within easy reach. Contact your fire department for advice on selection and operation of an extinguisher.

Putting out a cooking oil fire

- **Never throw water onto a cooking oil fire.** This will cause the fire to flare and spread.
- Always keep a lid nearby that fits the frying pan or pot. If overheated oil ignites, turn off the heat and exhaust fan, then put the lid on the pot or pan to smother the flames.
- Never try to carry a pan of burning oil outside. The oil may splash over the edge and start new fires, or cause serious burns.
- Do not pour burning oil into the sink.
- If the fire cannot be put out with a lid, get everyone outside and call the fire department from a neighbour's phone.
- An ABC rated extinguisher (suitable for flammable liquids and electrical equipment fires) may be used for small fires. If the fire gets worse, get out!

Putting out an oven fire

- Turn off the heat.
- Close the oven door and keep it closed.
- If necessary, use a fire extinguisher.

Christmas tree safety tips

A Christmas tree can brighten your home - just make sure it isn't a fire hazard.

Keeping live trees safe

- The fresher and more moist a tree, the safer it is.
- Select a tree with needles that do not pull easily from the branches or break when gently bent.
- Clean the tree stand with a mixture of one cup of water and a capful of bleach.
- Re-cut the trunk diagonally one or two inches above the old cut and immediately place in water.
- Always keep the water level in the tree stand above the cut line.
- Remove the tree as soon as possible after the holidays.
- Never burn a tree in a fireplace or wood stove.

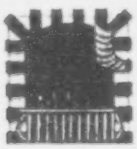
Christmas tree safety

- Place the tree away from exits and heat sources.
- Never decorate a tree with burning candles.
- Check tree lights for damaged or loose connections. Discard damaged light sets.
- Replace burnt out bulbs immediately or other bulbs may overheat and become a fire hazard. Replacement bulbs should have the correct wattage/voltage.
- Avoid overloading electric outlets and inspect all extension cords before using.
- Switch the tree lights off at bedtime or when leaving the house.
- If a tree catches fire, do not try to move it. Use a fire extinguisher, if available, to put out the flames. If no fire extinguisher is available, evacuate the house and call the fire department.

Keeping metallic trees safe

- Never use electric lights on metallic trees. Use spotlights to illuminate the trees from a safe distance.

Heat your home safely



Although they bring us comfort and warmth, heating sources in the home can increase the risk of fire. Use caution with all heat sources.

Portable heaters

- Space heaters need space! Place all space heaters at least one meter (three feet) away from anything that can burn (wallpaper, bedding, clothing).
- Turn off and unplug space heaters when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Do not leave children or pets unattended with space heaters.
- Check electric space heaters for frayed cords or overheating.
- When unplugging a space heater, or any electrical device, pull the plug and not the cord.
- Use only the recommended fuel for liquid-fuelled space heaters. Never use gasoline.
- Always turn off the heater and let cool before refueling.
- An un-vented heater (non-electric) can produce deadly amounts of carbon monoxide. Ensure fumes are vented outdoors.

Fireplaces

- Burn small amounts of wood at frequent intervals.
- Don't burn paper, wrapping paper or pine boughs. This can cause sparks to drift out of your chimney and ignite your roof or a neighbour's house. Also, large fires or burning gift-wrap can set the creosote in your chimney on fire.
- Have your chimney checked and cleaned by a professional each winter.
- Use a screen in front of the fireplace to keep sparks and embers in.
- Never use gasoline or other flammable liquids to light a fire. The vapors will explode.
- Dispose of ashes in a metal container; never store them in your home.
- Before going to bed, make sure the fire is out and that the embers won't rekindle a fire.

Kid check: protecting children from fire

It is normal for children, even as young as two years old, to be curious about fire. Guiding children to fire-safe behavior is the responsibility of parents and caregivers.

Fire play happens when a child, curious and unsupervised, plays with matches, a lighter, an open flame or a hot stove. This curiosity can lead to a fire that may result in death, injury and property damage.

Fires started by children in the home usually happen in a bedroom, followed by the living room, closet and kitchen. If your child or a child you know is curious about fire, there are three steps to prevent a fire tragedy:

Step 1: Prevent children from starting fires

- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach. Even toddlers are known to have started fires with lighters.
- Never leave a hot stove, space heater or lit candle unattended.
- Reward the child for bringing any matches or lighters they find to an adult.
- Never leave children unsupervised at home - not even to run a quick errand.

Step 2: Teach children about fire

- Teach children that fire is not a toy; it is a tool we use to cook food and heat our homes.
- Educate your kids about the dangers of fire and make sure they know that all fires, even small ones, can spread very quickly.
- Provide opportunities for school-aged children to understand the safe use of fire, such as lighting birthday candles, under your supervision.
- Teach your child how to say no when friends suggest playing with fire.

Step 3: Set a good example

- Emphasize the fire and burn safety rules you follow when using fire.
- With your children, regularly inspect your home for fire hazards.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms.
- Plan and practice home fire escape drills.

Home fire escape plan

In as little as three minutes, a small fire can lead to a flashover. A flashover happens when the contents of a room get so hot everything suddenly bursts into flames. When a fire breaks out indoors, the smoke has no way out. It hangs from the ceiling like a choking blanket - thick and dark. A small fire can produce enough smoke to fill a house in minutes. In addition to reducing visibility, smoke contains toxic gases that can numb your senses and leave you dazed.

To get you and your family out quickly and safely, you need to have planned and practiced your fire escape routes. Doing so could save your life!

Plan your escape

- Involve the whole household in drawing a simple map of your home and marking exactly how to get out in an emergency.
- Identify two exits from **each** room, particularly bedrooms. Planning two escape routes could save your life if one exit is blocked by smoke or fire.
- Establish a safe meeting place outside of the home.
- Make special plans for very young children, older people or people with disabilities living in your home. Decide who will be responsible for helping them escape in an emergency.

Practice your escape plan

- Practice your home fire escape plan twice a year.
- Make the drill as realistic as possible. Practice different scenarios and escapes.
- Make sure that everyone—from kids to grandparents—is involved.
- Most fire emergencies happen at night. Ensure you practice at night while everyone is asleep.

  Follow these tips for a safe escape:

  → **Crawl low under smoke.** Pretend there's smoke in the room. In a real fire, the air closest to the floor will be fresher, cooler and easier to see through.

  → **Check the door with your hand.** If the door is hot, fire could already be burning through! That's when you'll use your alternate exit. If the door is cool it may be safe. Brace your shoulder against it, turn your face away and open it a crack to check. If there is any smoke or heat, slam the door shut and head for an alternate exit.

  → **Make sure everyone knows how to open the windows in your home.** In most cases, a window will be your best alternate exit. If you have to smash it to get out - do it. Place a blanket or pillow on the windowsill to protect yourself from broken glass. If the bedroom windows are high above the ground, consider getting fire ladders, and practice so everyone knows how to use them.

  → **Close doors behind you.** A closed door can hold back toxic smoke and flames in an emergency and could give you a few lifesaving seconds to escape.

  → **Get out, stay out.** Decide on a meeting place outside so everyone can be accounted for. Designate one person to find a phone away from the home, and call the fire department. Do not go back inside the house until the fire department says it is okay to do so.

  → **If you are trapped, protect yourself until help arrives.** Close the doors between you and the smoke and stuff air vents and cracks with blankets, towels or clothing. Then, carefully open a window to signal for help and let in some fresh air.

Be smart with smoke alarms

Smoke alarms save lives...but only if they are installed and are in working order.

Installing smoke alarms

Install at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home, including the basement. Make sure there is an alarm in or near every sleeping area. Follow manufacturer's instructions on installation and maintenance.

Keep smoke alarms working properly

- Replace the batteries in your smoke alarms once a year, or as soon as the alarm "chirps," warning that the battery is low. **Helpful hint:** schedule battery replacements for the same day you change your clock from daylight to standard time in the fall.
- Regular vacuuming or dusting of your smoke alarms can help keep them working properly. Follow manufacturer's instructions for cleaning directions.
- Replace your smoke alarms once every 10 years.
- Never "borrow" a battery from a smoke alarm for another appliance.
- Make sure everyone in your home can hear and recognize the sound of the alarms and knows how to react immediately.
- When testing your alarms you are checking two things: You want to ensure that power is being transmitted to the alarm, and that it will activate in the presence of smoke.
- Even the types of alarms that have a pilot light to indicate power is being transmitted should be tested regularly.
- When you've been away from home for a few days, check your alarm when you return to make sure it is functioning.

Test your alarm

- Test your smoke alarms monthly with smoke. Models that have a test button also need to be tested monthly with smoke because the test button may only tell you that the buzzer works, and not necessarily that the smoke-sensing mechanism is functioning.
  - → Drift smoke from a just-extinguished candle.
  - → Alarm should sound within 20 seconds.
  - → Fan smoke away to silence alarm.

If your alarm does not sound:

Possible Causes	Action
Battery dead	replace immediately
No electricity	check fuse box/breaker panel or contact an electrician
Smoke alarm dead	replace immediately

Sensible smoking

Falling asleep while smoking, discarding smoldering butts, using inadequate ashtrays or smoking near flammable liquids are all hazardous activities.

In Alberta homes, most smoking-related fires start in the living room, family room, den or bedroom. Many of these fires are started by someone falling asleep in bed or on upholstered furniture such as a sofa while smoking. Quite often, the fire victim is also impaired by alcohol, drugs or medication and this prevents them from awakening before they suffer fatal smoke inhalation or burns.

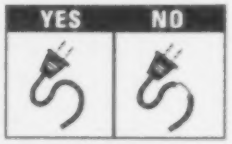
Safety tips for smokers

- Never smoke in bed, or when drowsy from medication or alcohol. A lit cigarette that falls on a pillow, bedding or couch can start a KILLER fire.
- After a party, check for fallen cigarette butts on sofas and behind cushions. Make sure they have not burned through the fabric as they could smolder and later erupt into a deadly fire.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children.
- Flush cigarette butts and ashes down the toilet. Do not dispose of them in a trashcan.
- Never smoke while handling flammable liquids such as gasoline.
- Remember ALL matches, lighters, cigarettes, pipes and cigars are potentially dangerous. Treat them with caution.
- Periodically check the elderly and/or persons with disabilities who smoke and may be less able to save themselves in the event of a fire.

Remember: Fire prevention efforts must not only educate smokers, but their friends and families as well. Everyone must be aware of the dangers of careless smoking. Only then can we reduce the number of injuries and deaths caused by smoking-related fires.

The Night Before Christmas for Firefighters

'Twas the night before Christmas when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse,
When down through the chimney all covered with soot,
Came the SPIRIT OF FIRE, an ugly galoot.
His eyes glowed like embers, his features were stern,
As he looked all around for something to burn.
What he saw made him grumble, his anger grew higher,
For there wasn't a thing that would start a good fire.
No door had been blocked by the big Christmas tree,
It stood in the corner leaving passage-ways free,
The lights that glowed brightly for Betty and Jim,
Had been hung with precaution so none touched a limb.
All the wiring was new, not a break could be seen,
And water at its base kept the tree nice and green,
The tree had been trimmed by a mother insistent,
That the ornaments used, must be fire-resistant.
And would you believe it, right next to the tree,
Was a suitable box for holding debris;
A place to throw wrappings of paper and string,
From all of the gifts that Santa might bring.
The ugly galoot was so mad he near bust,
As he climbed up the chimney in utter disgust,
For the folks in this home had paid close attention,
To all the rules of good FIRE PREVENTION.



Holiday Fire Safety: Public Service Announcements

The following PSAs may be duplicated for use as local newspaper, television or radio news releases, or may be distributed to schools or at public events where fire prevention and safety are promoted. Please use these PSAs to enhance your holiday fire safety programs.

READING TIME: 15 seconds

Home fires increase by 30 per cent during the holiday season. Practice fire safety this holiday season while decorating, cooking, heating your home, smoking, and using candles. A message from your local fire department.

READING TIME: 15 seconds

We don't plan on coming to your Christmas party unless we have to. Please practice fire safety during the festive season and have a fire safe holiday. A message from your local fire department.

READING TIME: 20 seconds

Give the gift of fire safety this Christmas. Smoke alarms and fire extinguishers are inexpensive Christmas gifts. Yet, they can be a life saver. During the holiday season fire deaths and injuries increase dramatically. This holiday season, give a gift to save a life. A message from your local fire department.

READING TIME: 20 seconds

Be fire-safe this Christmas. Develop and practice a home hazard checklist for your home. Are lit candles located away from decorations? Are electrical cords or wires frayed, or cracked? Are open flames being monitored? Is your Christmas tree near a heat source? Are electrical outlets overloaded? Are matches or lighters within access of children? A message from (insert local ID).

READING TIME: 30 seconds

Most fatal home fires happen at night, while you and your family are asleep – when seconds can make a difference between life and death. You have little time to get out! Do you know what to do? If you have one or more smoke alarms in your home, you increase your chances of surviving a fire! Statistics show that fire danger increases by 30 per cent during the holiday season. The (insert local ID) reminds you to prepare for fire this holiday season by installing and testing smoke alarms and creating and practicing a fire escape plan in your home.

Holiday Fire Safety: Advertisements

The following advertisements may be duplicated for use in local newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and other publications, or may be distributed to schools or at public events during the December holiday season.

These advertisements can be sponsored by local businesses and/or used to promote your fire department by inserting the corresponding logo(s) at the bottom of the ad.

Looking for a Great Gift Idea?

For the safety of your friends and family, give someone you love a smoke alarm or fire extinguisher this holiday season.

SMOKE ALARMS ARE GREAT HOLIDAY GIFTS!

Protect your family and friends. Make smoke alarms part of your fire-safe Holiday Season!

Only you can prevent fires.

MAKE YOUR HOME SAFE THIS HOLIDAY

- Keep your natural Christmas tree moist and away from heat sources.
- Keep decorations away from lights and candles.
- Keep matches, candles and lighters away from children.
- Don't overload your electrical circuits.
- Don't place space heaters too close to combustible items.
- Test your smoke alarms.
- Plan and practice a home fire escape plan.

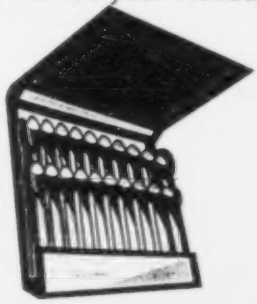
Don't let a fire spoil *your* Christmas!

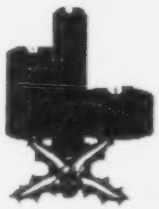
Lights on a Christmas tree are magical but . . .

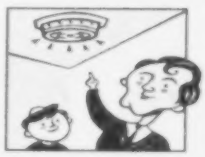
- Use only approved (CSA/ULC) lighting sets.
- Replace worn sets and never overload outlets.
- Unplug lighting before you go to bed or leave the house.

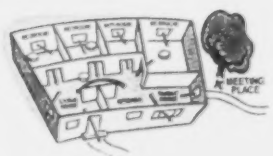
Holiday Fire Safety: Graphics

The following graphics may be duplicated for use in local newspapers or other publications, on television stations, or may be distributed to schools at public events where fire prevention and safety are promoted. Please use these graphics to enhance your Holiday Fire Safety programs.









The following clips are from the National Fire Protection Association. Use of these graphics must include the following attribution: "Reproduced from NFPA's Fire Prevention Week Web site, www.firepreventionweek.org. ©2004 NFPA."

Holiday Fire Safety: Event Planner

The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger. Follow these tips to promote a successful Holiday Fire Safety Campaign in your community.

Working with Schools

Organizing partnerships with local schools is an essential part of communicating fire prevention and safety in your community. This December holiday season, organize with your local schools to teach children important lifesaving messages.

- Inform local school principals and teachers of the common fire hazards that school children are exposed to during the December holiday season and offer a corresponding safety presentation.
- Meet with the school's principal to discuss the best presentation strategy according to the audience group size, age, and learning characteristics.
- Your presentation should include prevention and safety lessons and/or demonstrations, and provide corresponding learning activities or projects for the children, such as fire safety games, arts and crafts, skits, displays, posters, stories, or learning stations. Older children can present their fire safety projects to children in the younger grades.
- You can use the children's fire safety holiday activities included in this Holiday Fire Safety Campaign Kit as learning activities for your presentation.
- You may also book and use the Alberta Fire Commissioner's display boards, Hazard House or Sparky costume to deliver your presentation. Call (780) 427-8392 to make your booking (310-0000 toll free).
- Notify students, parents and teachers of the upcoming events at the school by providing the school with an article for their school newsletter, a take home letter for parents or by delivering a special presentation at staff or principal meetings.
- Ensure success of your school program by rewarding teachers and students for their participation!

Community Events

Make fire prevention and safety education a community event. Hold activities that can be attended by members of your community and partner with local business to promote and finance your events and activities.

How to set up a community event

1. Determine your audience (group size, age, learning styles).
2. Decide what message(s) you want to deliver.
3. Keep it brief. Generally, the public won't attend an event that requires hours of their time.
4. Make your events fun and interactive for your audience.
5. Pick a date. Ensure it is held at a time when most of the people in your community are available. Check your community calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts (Saturday and Sunday afternoon are the usually the best time to organize these events).
6. Ensure adequate staffing and equipment. Have backups available.
7. Dress for success.
8. Provide fire prevention and safety handouts for all age groups.
9. Include refreshments and prizes to draw public interest in your event. Arrange sponsorship for these items.
10. Get participation from the top. The presence of high-ranking fire and other community officials will enforce support of your event.
11. Promote your activities. Your event won't be a success if no one knows about it. Send out news releases, flyers, advertisements, and letters to local media and community members.
12. Evaluate your program.

Program events and activities

Community-wide Fire Drill

Holding a community-wide fire drill is a great way to motivate positive behaviour change to reduce the risk of death in your community. It also serves as a good media hook, helping to raise your fire department's profile and reinforce the important role of public safety education in saving lives.

- Have residents in your municipality develop their own escape plans and practice them with the rest of the community during a specific time.
- At the pre-arranged time, sound the fire station alarm(s) or other signal to alert the community that the drill has begun.
- Keep your fire station open to the public in order to congratulate and celebrate with the families that took part in the dire drill.

Interactive Learning Stations

Make holiday fire prevention and safety an interactive experience by creating learning stations. Take the learning stations to a local school, mall, retail store, or other community location where children and their families can get together. Your stations could include some of the following topics:

- Candles
- Christmas trees and holiday decorations
- Fireplaces
- Cooking
- Smoke alarms
- Home fire escape planning

Open House

An open house at the fire hall provides an excellent opportunity to educate the public about holiday fire prevention and safety as well as the varied activities and community service of the fire department. You may want to include activities such as:

- Tours of the station (with holiday decorations)
- Presentation of fire apparatus and equipment
- Holiday fire safety stations or presentations
- Santa Claus fire station visit
- Children's holiday fire safety activities

Fire Safety Displays

- Organize holiday fire prevention and safety displays at local malls, schools, and community centres.
- Use this opportunity to educate the public about important holiday safety messages including paper decorations, gatherings, Christmas trees, lights, candles, and the use of smoke alarms and escape plans.
- You may want to book and use the displays available from the Fire Commissioner's Office to enhance your message. Call the Fire Commissioner's office at (780) 427-8392 to make your booking (310-0000 toll free).

Fire Safety Fairs

A fire safety fair provides fire departments with an opportunity to interact with their community through participation in fun and exciting activities. Invite school representatives, the media, and of course the mayor!

- Live Christmas tree burn demonstrations
- Smoke house shows
- Interactive learning stations
- Fire Safety House
- Hose and target competitions
- Jr. firefighter obstacle course
- Fire extinguisher practice
- Have the public suit up with firefighter gear

Working with the Media

The December holiday season is an excellent time to work with the local media (radio, television, magazines, newspapers) to deliver and promote your fire prevention and safety messages. Follow these tips to help facilitate partnerships with your local media.

- Develop a good partnership with your local media representatives to educate them about the importance of fire prevention and safety education.
- Send out a news release to media outlets in your community. Identify your holiday fire safety activities and provide a schedule of your events. Invite the media to attend.
- Follow-up by calling your media contacts and building their interest in the campaign. Provide them with the public safety announcements, statistics, fire prevention and safety articles and tips, graphics, advertisements, and activities included in this kit. These items can be copied and downloaded off of the Fire Commissioner's Office website for easy use by the media. Also, provide pictures and activities of your own fire department and personnel. Encourage media participation by holding contests, handing out prizes and/or recognizing their efforts with a certificate.
- You may also want to organize an interview with local television stations. Prepare exciting posters, graphs, charts, and pictures. Encourage the media to advertise your message by explaining these exciting attention grabbers, which will likely encourage them to advertise your activities as they encourage good viewer ratings.
- A sample news release is available on the following page for you to download, copy, and distribute.

Fundraising

Local business leaders are important to a successful public safety campaign. Use these tips to create a visible role for local sponsors.

How sponsors can support your programs

- Display and hang fire prevention and safety banners and posters in offices, windows and outside storefronts
- Pass out fire safety materials and advertisements to customers and clients
- Lend space for events and activities
- Donate prizes, products and materials
- Donate money
- Local media can donate airtime
- Donate volunteer time

Requesting sponsorship

- Start early. A successful fundraising effort takes time.
- Develop a list of potential sponsors and participants. Ensure you include those organizations associated with safety, and include high profile organizations, such as major sports teams or role models. Approach as many of these potential sponsors as possible.
- Develop a budget for your campaign and a 'wish list' of supplies, refreshments, and fire safety materials that you need. By developing wish list of supplies, you can help sponsors identify the items that will be most valuable to you.
- Find ways to provide credit to your sponsors for their help, such as adding logos to handouts and giving acknowledgement in news releases.
- When asking for sponsorship, consider drafting a letter. Be specific about what you need and how you will give credit to their organization. Help them understand why safety is important and how the campaign will positively affect the community's or their organization's well-being. Be prepared to answer questions about where their funding will be used and listen carefully to what they want to give - they may offer something that you hadn't thought of. Remember to gracefully accept whatever they can provide.
- A sample fundraising support letter is available on the following page for you to download, copy, and distribute.

Sample News Release

Please contact your local newspaper to find out how far in advance you need to submit this news release prior to your activities. Download a copy of this news release onto your fire department's letterhead. Fill in the blanks where noted and send it to your media contacts. Don't forget to follow up with a telephone call to make sure each contact received the release and to answer any questions they may have.

2004 DECEMBER HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY CAMPAIGN

For release on:
(Month/Date, 2004)
For more information call:
(Your Name, Title)
(Your Telephone Number)

(*Your fire department*) (*does what activity*) for Holiday Fire Safety

(Your town/city/province) – The (Your fire department) is joining the Fire Commissioner's Office and other safety advocates this December to remind children and adults about fire safety during the December holiday season. The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger. Our goal is to teach local families important life-saving fire prevention and safety messages during the December holidays.

Provincial fire statistics from 1998 to 2002 show that holiday fire and fire losses increase substantially as follows:

- Fires - up 30 per cent
- Fire deaths - up 40 per cent
- Fire injuries - up 37 per cent
- Property losses - up 16 per cent

These fire statistics demonstrate that people need to take extra fire safety precautions during the holiday season to ensure the safety of themselves and their loved ones during one of the happiest times of the year. The (*your fire department*) will be (*activity in your community*) to teach local families the fire hazards associated with this season and the necessary steps to diminish them. (Describe activity, identify dates, times, and location)

Here are some key holiday fire prevention and safety tips:

- Never leave candles unattended.
- Christmas tree light bulbs can generate enough heat to set fire to nearby combustibles – keep decorations away from light bulbs.
- Supervise children at all times, and keep matches, lighters, and candles out of their reach.
- If you are distracted while using the stove, turn off the heat and remove pots and pans before doing anything else.
- Avoid smoking if you're not fully awake and alert. Many fires start when a lit cigarette falls onto bedding or upholstered furniture.
- Heating appliances need at least one metre (three feet) of space around them. Avoid placing any combustibles within this space.
- Most chimney fires occur in wood-burning fireplaces — ensure your chimneys are cleaned and professionally inspected regularly. Only burn small quantities of wood at a time.
- Most importantly, test your smoke alarms to ensure they are working properly, and have a well-rehearsed fire escape plan.

For more information contact (your fire department and contact information).

Sample Fundraising Letter

Copy this letter on your fire department letterhead and fill in the blanks for a ready-to-use fundraising appeal.

Dear [name of contact]:
[Town/city/province] Fire Department is joining the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office in promoting holiday fire safety this December. The December holiday season is a time of high fire risk and danger. Fire deaths, injuries and property losses all significantly increase during this time of year. Our goal is to teach local families important life-saving fire prevention and safety messages during the December holidays.

I'm writing to ask [name of company/organization] to support the [town/city/province] Fire Department as we encourage community residents to participate in holiday fire prevention and safety this December. [Town/city/province] is planning to promote this safety campaign through [list activities that require funding, such as open houses, parades, safety fairs, community-wide smoke alarm installations, school and store visits/presentations, etc.] Your financial support would help us purchase and distribute [list materials] at these events. By contributing $____, you'll be demonstrating your commitment to the essential work of fire prevention, and making [town/city/province] a safer place.

In return, we'll recognize your support by [clearly explain how you plan to promote the organization's support of the Holiday Fire Safety Campaign in your community].

Because we all know that [name of company/organization] cares deeply about the well-being of families of our community, the [town/city/province] Fire Department thinks you would be a natural partner for our exciting upcoming December Holiday Fire Safety efforts. Through [name of company/organization's] support, the [town/city/province] Fire Department will reach more [town/city/province] residents than ever, educating them about the vital importance of holiday fire prevention and safety this December. There is growing proof that fire prevention campaigns save lives.

I've enclosed some holiday fire safety materials to help familiarize you with the program. I'll follow up with you next week, and look forward to speaking with you about ways we can work together to make [town/city/province] a safer place. I can be reached at [phone number] if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]
[Title]
[Town/city/province] Fire Department